Passed March 2d 1829

University of Pennsylvania

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On acute Dysentery.

This is a disease, more particularly, of the Autumnal months; but, like all other affections, unconfined by circumstances, Sporadic cases, occurring throughout the year. Its particular, or special devastations, manifest themselves, however, in the fall of the year, the season of the year, noticed, being especially, or peculiarly propitious, for its generation, in tropical climates, it is also, of more manifest prevalence. Under the oppressive influence, of a burning tropical sun, the vital energies of the system, exhausted, by its influence, is rendered peculiarly obnoxious to those causes, giving rise to dysentery. In military excursions, marching throug countries, abounding in sultry heats, and, excess of moisture, this combination proving the most adequate, for the production of Dysentery. All diseases perhaps, are maintained by excitement; the most favourable state of the system, for the action of excitants, is that of debility; were we to look,

for debility, in the case before us, we should without difficulty discover, that those very causes, every way calculated for its production, had been exerting their influence. And, moreover, that the system was, actually labouring under great debility. Great heat applied to the system, provokes to action, perhaps, more than any: one other stimulant; we know, likewise, that an unaccustomed stimulant, is less easily borne; In those Military Campaigns, which have been conducive, to these remarks, the Soldiery translated from a cold climate, to a scorching sun, they have laboured under, the double detriment, of an unaccustomed excessive stimulant, which prostrates the vital energies, to such a degree, as to cause direct debility. Forced marches, in sultry climes, by opening the sluices of the skin, gives rise, to such a profuse discharge, as to make, the system sink under debility. Food then administered, of a kind, incompatible with this debility, which, it is supposed, at present affects the system-

equally, gives rise to such an unnatural irritation, as to, augment the debility of the stomach and intestinal-Canal; from the exposure to the chill air of the night, there is, such a repulsion internally, as to, overload the weaken^d interior, the Stomach and Intestines more especially, causes Dysentery. The predisposing causes, as we have seen, are those occasioning debility; the exciting causes, any Stimuli applied.

The Symptoms of this disease, may probably, sometimes at first, be fever; but it is likely that it is rarely such, as, some bowel affection, may probably exist from the first; It may be ushered in by costiveness, or, Diarrhoe may commence the attack; at first there may be a discharge of fæcal matter, though most generally the intestines are so constricted, as to prevent faeces from appearing; The discharges may consist of mucus alone, or of an intermixture with blood; pus is occasionally discharged: There are Tormina and Tenesmus, with frequent solicitations for —

evacuations, which merely tend, by their strainings, to increase the pain and inflamation. There are nausea and vomiting, There is tenderness over the abdomen, there are all the affections, dependent on fever. quick pulse. hot skin, furred tongue. pains in the back and loins. with restlessness and anxiety. The mode of treatment consists, in reducing the fever, by general blood letting; When it is reduced which alone, rarely arrests the disease, we then have regard to the local affection. which, being of an inflammatory nature, should be combated, by local evacuations, and revulsives; leeching, and cupping, the former to be preferred, when they can be commanded. Blisters to the extremities may perhaps, answer a better purpose, than applied to the tender abdomen. Cathartics, if the stomach will admit them, for determining to the surface; When not interfering with the other applications, the warm bath will answer a good purpose.

I have yet said nothing of purgatives; It is evident that if at all allowable, they must be of the milder kinds; as those, any wise harsh in their operation, are quite inadmissible; As they would augment the inflammation of the intestines; Castor oil may be given by the mouth; and mild injections by the Anus Demulcents for this latter purpose are to be preferred when the system is reduced sufficiently, we must endeavour to calm the tormina, and tenesmus, as they exert a very unfavourable influence, on the disease. Perhaps the only means to arrest them, is by appropriate doses of Opium. or Laudanum, they should be given to produce the desired effect; if timidly given they serve but to aggravate the disease. The diet must be accommodated to the state of the system, of the mildest and least stimulating kind, as the irritation, is transmitted, direct to the intestines, from an irritated Stomach. The clothing should be, rather, warm. than cold. to maintain an-

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an action on the surface. Mercury is our last resource in the curative way, And it must be evident, of the impropriety of administering it, until, sufficient reduction is effected. As it is the Stimulating qualities which we require, no vestige of febrile action should remain; We then give it in small does frequently repeated, neither should we discontinue its use too quickly; As a long and protracted employment will alone benefit. Nitric Acid given internally, is a substitute for the Mercury; as its action is probably very Analagous to it; But it is likewise recommended as a bath, a practice no doubt serviceable, more especially in its reduced form, as it would be a powerful revulsive, The binding of the Abdomen with a flannel roller, has been proclaimed as useful, but in the Second or reduced form, would this be advisable, as Dr Chapman says, it would aggravate the excited form. In this, as in all other diseases, we have perhaps the most reason for strict injunctions in the-

recuperative stage, patients are too liable, to slight the admonitions of the physician, and occasion a return. He should avoid all exposure in inclement weather, he should not betake himself from the house at night; damp air should be avoided, and the diet should be strictly accommodated to the state of the disease; As it may have, at first produced it, so it will, in all likelihood, reproduce it, if not strictly guarded.